

Legislative Update

2003 Report to the Voters From Rep. Shirley Hankins - 8th District

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Dear Neighbors,

Plenty has been said and written about how the Legislature addressed a \$2.7 billion budget shortfall through a combination of cuts, salary freezes, tuition increases and higher liquor prices.

While I have concerns about how the operating budget was handled, many other accomplishments that came out of the Legislature this year will positively affect the 8th District – the majority of which didn't receive a lot of news coverage.

As a member of the House Capital Budget Committee and the House Transportation Committee, I am especially pleased with the outcomes of the capital and transportation budgets – both of which will infuse millions of dollars into our local area.

This report provides a brief look at these accomplishments and more.



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Local students serve as pages

Many thanks to Peter Blake, Richland, and Kimberly Nguyen, Kennewick, who came to Olympia to serve as legislative pages.



Kimberly Nguyen



Peter Blake

Pages help deliver documents to legislators in their offices, committee meetings and in the House chamber during floor sessions. They also attend "page school" during their week at the Capitol, where they learn about the legislative process.

Pages are between the ages of 14 and 17. They must have at least a C+ grade average and obtain written permission from their parents and school.

More information about the House Page program can be found on the Internet by visiting <http://www.leg.wa.gov>

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Capital budget brings local tax dollars home

Communities throughout the 8th District will receive more than \$3 million from a \$2.57 billion capital construction budget approved by the Legislature this year.

I serve on the House Capital Budget Committee and made sure that nearly every community in our local area receives money for various local projects.

I am pleased that the WSU Tri-Cities branch campus will receive \$900,000 for a new bioproducts processing laboratory operated jointly with Battelle's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. The new laboratory will transform "biomass," such as corn fiber, mill feed, potato peelings, and even livestock waste, into bioproducts such as plastics, fibers, adhesives and solvents.

I also worked to secure \$1.5 million for a new building at WSU-Prosser which will be used for viticulture research to help local wine producers grow quality grapes.

Other local projects funded in the capital budget include: Benton Affordable Housing - \$25,000; Benton City Skate Park - \$97,728; Highlands Grange Park improvements - \$300,000; Prosser Skate Park - \$60,000; Richland Players Theater - \$51,000; S.E. Washington Center for the Deaf - \$27,000; and Zintel Canyon Greenway (7th and Anderson) - \$100,000.



Artist's rendition of new bioproducts processing laboratory at WSU Tri-Cities.



Rep. Hankins secured \$51,000 for improvements to the Richland Players Theater.

Transportation package includes millions for local projects



Rep. Hankins recently welcomed Gov. Gary Locke to the Tri-Cities where he spoke at an event showcasing local wines.

For years, we have been struggling in Olympia to find the dollars needed to address our growing transportation needs. Various efforts to increase transportation funding have failed... until this year. A \$4.17 billion, 10-year construction plan was adopted this year by the Legislature, which includes a nickel-a-gallon gas tax increase, a 0.3 percent surcharge on the sale of new and used vehicles, and a 15 percent increase on truck weight fees. It's the first time the state's gas tax has been increased in 12 years.

Locally, that revenue will provide more than \$94 million for numerous projects within the 8th District, including widening of the Highway 240 causeway from the Yakima River Bridge outside of Richland to Columbia Center Boulevard in Kennewick. It also includes \$35.5 million to widen Highway 12 from Burbank to Wallula – a highway that has claimed several lives because of its safety problems.



Coming attractions. . .

Next year, I plan to assist in the efforts to bring a new wine and culinary center to Prosser. The proposed center is to be named after the late Walter Clore, who was known as the "Father of Washington Wine." The center would overlook the Yakima River and would help to showcase our growing wine industry, bringing jobs and increasing tourism.